The Southern PATRIOT

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Ordeal by Slander: Eastland & The SCEF

The SCEF was subjected to a gratuitous, humiliating ordeal last month. For three days, March 18-20, a group of its officers, board members and former board members were obliged to defend their patriotism and personal character before a Senate Internal Security subcommittee "task force" headed by Senator James O. Eastland, Mississippi Dixiecrat.

Summoned to endure the slanders of professional tale-bearers were Aubrey Williams, president of the SCEF; Dr. James A. Dombrowski, executive director; Myles Horton, a board member, and two former members of the board, Mrs. Clifford Durr and Leo Scheiner. Alva Taylor, secretary, and Tom Ludwig, a former board member, were also subpoenaed but were unable to appear because of illness.

Characteristically, the "investigators" resorted to trial-by-headline. In announcing the hearings Eastland pre-judged the SCEF as a Communist-infiltrated organization. Committee Counsel Richard Arens promised reporters he would deliver "four or five Fifth Amendment Communists." Star informer Paul Crouch, "high-ranking ex-Red" (sic), was flown in from Hawaii, as if his store of stale and discredited recollections were facts of great import. The head of the Louisiana state police announced he was going to attend the sessions to arrest violators of the state's anti-subversion law.

This vicious abuse of governmental prerogative was exposed and defied by its intended victims. The objectives of the SCEF and the moral position of its leaders were explained and defended, despite deliberate harassment and discourtesy on the part of the questioners. The accused flatly contradicted their accusers and demanded perjury investigations be instituted.

Unfortunately, only the Montgomery, Ala., **Advertiser** reported Eastland's admission of failure at the conclusion of the hearings and told of the vote of censure that newsmen covering them gave the subcommittee. However, influential organs of opinion and distinguished writers the nation over have been quick to see the implications of this inquisition and have defended the SCEF. We are reprinting excerpts from these in an adjoining column.

There remains one unfinished part of this shameful business that is of vital interest to the SCEF's supporters. Dr. Dombrowski

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"I'M ONLY AIMING AT THE ONE IN THE MIDDLE"

MRS. FDR, OTHERS RALLY TO DEFENSE

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt in "My Day": In plain English, we had better understand what communism really is and we had better to be very sure that investigating committees and courts understand the real danger of communism. It is equally important, however, that they understand that those who hold liberal views which may go a little further than some of their most conservative neighbors are still not communists.

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Alfred Maund in "The Battle of New Orleans," The Nation, April 3: . . . The Dixiecrats, losing the battle of racism in the courts, may have turned to McCarthyism to intimidate decent white Southerners

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LETTERS: Anger at Outrage Is Indivisible

To the Editor:

I hope that the New Orleans circus affected others the way it affected us. It made us ashamed of ourselves for delaying our contribution to the Fund.

We are enclosing a check for 1954. And we hope it does not take another investigation to shake a few dollars loose from us next time you ask for contributions.

MARVIN AND NAOMI CAPLAN
Washington, D. C.

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To the Editor:

I still believe in the aims and objectives of the old Southern Conference for Human Welfare, and have no apologies to make to any one because of association with the men and women who constituted the board of directors.

While I have not attended your meetings since I took ill, my heart and spirit has been with everything you are doing, or have done. I think you and those connected with you in the Southern Conference Educational Fund are fighting for a more ideal America, and to my mind and judgment, that is a patriotic objective.

ROSCOE DUNGEE, *Publisher & Editor*
The Black Dispatch
Oklahoma City, Okla.

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To the Editor:

It is an honor to find one of the Episcopal League for Social Action members in the front line of scrimmage with the witch-hunting Congressional committees. More power to you,—and of course to Mr. and Mrs. Durr. (We still have in our archives the reprint of Mr. Durr's excellent address under ELSA auspices in San Francisco.)

KENNETH RIPLEY FORBES
Philadelphia, Pa.

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To the Editor:

I am so sorry that all of you good people have taken such a beating—of course we have hated the methods used in these committees for a long time but it is real heartache when the people we love and respect are hurt.

ELIZABETH M. FILLMAN
New York, N. Y.

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To the Editor:

I do sincerely hope that your good cause will not be permanently set back by this smear attempt. The present situation in our country makes me very sad because every good cause is being set upon and attacked in a very unfair manner. I know that your own faith and devotion to fairness and God's way will see you through.

EDWIN GALE
Beaumont, Tex.

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To the Editor:

I know it's your custom to acknowledge contributions to the Southern Conference Educational Fund.

It wouldn't be decent for us to accept your thanks for this increased unsolicited gift. Recognition should go to Messrs. McCarthy, Jenner and Velde.

Thank heaven there are groups that are immune to their punishment.

CONNIE S. LINDAU
New York, N. Y.

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To the Editor:

Thank you for your tireless, militant effort in the interest of human relations.

MOSES NEWSOME
Minister, First Baptist Church
Charleston, W. Va.

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To the Editor:

For the way you, Aubrey Williams the Durrs and Myles Horton stood up to the un-Americans, I am doubling my contribution to the SCEF this year. I hope all of the regular contributors will see the importance of your courageous stand and respond this way.

DONALD RASMUSSIN
Talladega College, Ala.

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To the Editor:

I was greatly distressed to read about the invasion of the inquisition into your territory and organization.

GEORGE D. PRATT, JR.
Bridgewater, Conn.

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To the Editor:

I understand that the precious Jenner Committee has been having a field day smearing you with mud. I hope that none of your organization believe these malicious lies. I'm sure I don't. I should like to see those fellows come out from behind their congressional immunity and get sued for defamation of character.

MISS C. Z. HARTMAN
Glen Ellyn, Ill.

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To the Editor:

Hope Eastland and Co. ease off after their publicity gig. Quite an extraordinary picture of Mr. Durr in the papers, the kind of a startling whiteness and event that is where Ben Shahn finds his material. I guess it's strange that such strong outbursts don't happen more often, but they are startling indeed, and I hope effective, with those who'd prefer to sleep through it all.

JONATHAN WILLIAMS
Black Mountain, N. C.

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One of the most sickening aspects of the "hearings" was the employment by the government of the United States of professional perjurers. The following letter pointing out the moral implications of what is now a disgraceful national policy was addressed to Senators Hill, Sparkman and Fulbright.

Dear Sir:

I write to you in protest against the recent three-day hearings in New Orleans conducted by a one-man subcommittee of the Senate Internal Security Committee.

As a friend and former colleague of Clifford J. Durr, I know him to be one of the finest, most sensitive and courageous human beings I have ever met. He was for many years a devoted, loyal, brilliant public servant of absolute integrity. He has consistently sacrificed personal gain because he believes in the United States and desires to serve the American people. He deserves and richly deserves the highest honors this society can award.

The immediate outrage by this subcommittee of every standard of American law and traditions of fair play and human decency has implications extending far beyond the abuse of another group of loyal American citizens. This is, after all, not new. It is imperative, however, that Congress conduct a searching examination of the whole role of these professional informers and ex-Communists who seek to destroy the reputations and careers of men and women who have served this country. What possible excuse can justify the use by official government agencies and Congressional committees of these mentally sick or morally diseased dregs? What has happened to our sense of justice and decency that we placidly permit and even protect and solicit their repeated perjury? Make no mistake, no individual, public official or private citizen, is secure from their poison.

One measure of the extent to which the American dream—once the hope of self-respecting men everywhere—has become tarnished is the present bankruptcy of leadership. It is time men were prepared if necessary to sacrifice personal ambitions and careers to set an example for those millions of voiceless Americans who are heartsick at the degradation of this society. In the words of John Jay

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Ordeal by Slander

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refused to submit to the subcommittee the names of any of the SCEF's 3,000 contributors. He had responded to a previous subpoena for the fund's financial records by bringing an auditor's statement. Eastland would not accept this and issued a second summons for the names of contributors "and all other records." Dr. Dombrowski refused to comply. Eastland then declared that he was in contempt of the subcommittee and promised to ask the Senate Judiciary Committee to vote a contempt citation.

Dr. Dombrowski based his refusal on the following legal points:

1. The subcommittee is an illegally constituted body in that the resolution creating the committee violated the First Amendment.

2. The subcommittee was usurping the power of the judiciary branch of the government in violation of the separation of powers doctrine.

3. In refusing to give the names, the SCEF was defending the First Amendment, especially relevant because the Fund is an educational agency.

Should the issue have to be fought out in the courts these constitutional considerations will be of wide importance. But there exists the possibility that the Senate will not go along with Eastland. (The hearings created an odor that should repulse anyone without the Mississippian's special racist concerns.) National sentiment is turning against unprincipled prying into private beliefs and associations. The motives of the Eastland group were clearly counter to the spirit and letter of fundamental American Law.

In the effort to block contempt proceedings a group of SCEF supporters have initiated an open letter of protest to Senator William Langer, North Dakota Republican who is head of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Signers so far include:

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, Mrs. Ethel Clyde, H. D. Bollinger, Reinhold Niebuhr, L. C. Bates, George D. Pratt, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. John M. Coe, John Wesley Dobbs, Harry F. Ward,

Mrs. Harry M. Gershon, Frederick Rhodes, William Obrinski, Mrs. T. S. Behre, Mrs. Andrew W. Simkins, Howard L. Parsons, Alva W. Taylor, Mrs. Lulu B. White, Corliss Lamont, Margaret I. Lamont,

W. H. Ferry, C. Herbert Marshall, John Hammond, Clara W. Mayer, Dan Gillmor, Mrs. Wilma S. Alexander, Miss Ruth B. Hawes, Moses Newsome, Ben Shahn, Mrs. Louis S. Weiss, Herman H. Long.

Joe Earl Elmore, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Maund, G. N. Whiting, Norman H. Rucker, James A. Shackford, Lee Larch, Alice Bowles, R. Clyde Minor, F. Woods Beckman, Peter H. Robinson.

William J. L. Wallace, Lillian Elder, Jonathan Evans, Harry C. Munro, D. L. Palmer, Harry W. Freeman, H. H. Wilson.

Patriot subscribers have been sent copies of this letter and are urged to sign it and to solicit the signatures of their friends and associates.

The matter is urgent. The effort and expense of this defense must not be forced to continue to a point where the program of the SCEF is paralyzed. To have this happen is to award victory to those plotters against racial progress who instigated the attack.

Mrs. FDR, Others

(Continued from Page 1.)

who might make common cause with the Negro. . . The S.C.E.F. is a small organization. . . But it is a rallying point in the South for liberal white churchmen, educators, physicians, students, and local citizen groups. If it is destroyed by false charges of conspiracy or subversion, it will not be readily replaced as a spokesman for the silent, fluid South.

(Reprints of the Nation article, which summarizes events at the hearings, may be had by writing the SCEF, 822 Perdido Street, New Orleans, La.)

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The St. Petersburg, Fla., Times: . . . McCarthyism is a virus not confined to any one senator nor to any one party. In New Orleans last Saturday Sen. James Eastland (D-Miss.), sitting as a one-man investigating committee, committed or permitted investigative abuses just as flagrant as any McCarthy ever perpetrated. . .

Sen. Eastland is pursuing the same path of political opportunism followed by Sen. McCarthy—attempting to discredit the liberal wing of Southern Democrats by the Communist label.

* * *

St. Louis Post-Dispatch: Is it good for the unity and self-respect of this nation that a professional witness should affront men and women of good repute, except before the full majesty of the law and with the adequate support of corroborating witnesses and evidence?

Is it fair that this should be done at a sort of hit-and-run congressional hearing which, in the end, makes no judicial determination? Is there not cause for anger? And for shame?

* * *

Jennings Perry in I. F. Stone's Weekly: Southern newsmen inevitably recalled that in other election years Congressman John Rankin, also of Mississippi, always could be counted on to discover that the "Jews and niggers" were about to take over the world, beginning with Mississippi. This year Eastland is up for re-election with strong opposition from young Lt. Gov. Carroll Gartin.

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Baltimore, Md., Afro-American: Senator Eastland, an apt student of mc-carthyism, sat in New Orleans as a one-man committee. He announced his intention was to ferret out Communists.

But it developed his true purpose was to brow-beat, harass and publicly slander, in the name of the U. S. Senate, officers of an organization which has delivered sledge-hammer blows against segregation.

That Senator Eastland was allowed to borrow an instrument of the Federal government to propagate his un-American view on racial matters is one of the most shocking developments in a shameful era.

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Alfred Mynders in Chattanooga Times: The New Orleans hearings, however, completely failed to put the Communist label on the Southern Conference Educational Fund. Its executive director, James A. Dombrowski, testified in response to a direct question: "I am not now nor have I ever been a Communist, a member of the Communist party or under Communist discipline."

LETTERS

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Chapman, an American who did speak out, **Unless the spark of personal courage, personal feeling, falls from heaven into American hearts—we're in for a period of degrading slavery—we're really in it now.**

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of personal example. As Senators of the United States you have the position, the opportunity, and the obligation to speak out against this corruption.

This is the great law of humanity, that has existed since history began, and will last while man lasts—evil, selfishness, and silence are one thing.

H. H. WILSON
Princeton, N. J.

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